

Policy 003: Complaints and Grievances Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) is committed to providing a high quality experience for each student and encourages students to inform it where there is any cause for concern. ACM's Student Complaints and Grievances Policy therefore exists to enable students to make complaints about such matter.

1.2 The relating procedures seek to ensure that complaints made by students are treated seriously and, if found to be valid, are acted upon to ensure that the students' interests are protected as far as it is possible for ACM to do so.

2. Purpose and scope

2.1 This policy describes how the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) supports students who are engaging with and making use of the Student Complaints and Grievances.

2.2 This policy explains, in an open, transparent and accessible way, how ACM deals with student complaints and grievances.

2.3 This policy relates to students studying at ACM Guildford and ACM Birmingham, on programmes validated by Middlesex University (HE) and University of the Arts London (FE). Students studying at ACM London, as part of a franchise partnership with Falmouth University, must refer to Falmouth University's Complaints Policy.

2.4 Applicant complaints and grievances are considered under ACM's Admissions Policy.

3. Policy Statement

Student Complaints and Grievances

3.1 A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about matters that affect the quality of the student's learning experience, or about a standard of service provided by ACM.

3.2 Complaints will only be considered if submitted by a student and will not normally be accepted if submitted by another party on their behalf.

3.3 The guiding principles are that complaints shall be:

- a) treated seriously and with fairness;
- b) dealt with promptly, sensitively and at the appropriate level of ACM;
- c) treated consistently across ACM;
- d) progressed through two stages – an informal stage and, if necessary, a formal stage;
- e) dealt with and resolved, wherever possible, informally and with the least amount of disruption as is possible.
- f) without prejudice to a student's or group of students' right to pursue remedies outside

ACM and the awarding body, having exhausted ACM and/or the awarding body's complaints procedures

- g) In order to be considered, any student complaint must be submitted no more than six calendar months after the event or problem relating to the complaint.

3.4 The procedures detailed below are designed for all other forms of student and applicant complaints.

3.5 It should be noted that the policy and its corresponding procedures do not cover:

- a) appeals against Assessment Board decisions;
- b) complaints relating to a case of alleged misconduct by the complainant;
 - matters relating to fitness to study where there is an existing fitness to study procedure.

3.6 ACM reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal or vice versa, if the submission is deemed to have been made to the incorrect procedure, or the submission falls properly within the remit of one procedure rather than the other. The outcome of an appeal cannot be made the subject of a complaint except where there is possible material error in arriving at the decision.

3.7 Each complaint will be considered on its own merits, subject to all legal and professional requirements.

3.8 A student will not be treated less favourably by ACM or suffer any detriment or disadvantage if they make a complaint in good faith, regardless of whether the complaint is successful. Anonymous or vexatious complaints will not normally be considered and the latter may lead to action under the Student Disciplinary procedures.

3.9 Any member of staff mentioned in a complaint will not be treated less favourably by ACM than if the complaint had not been brought. If, however, the complaint against a member of staff is upheld, that member may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under ACM policy for staff.

Timeframe for making a complaint

3.10 A student who is, or was recently a registered student, or a group of students wishing to complain should normally do so within 3 months of the event which has given rise to the complaint or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within 3 months of the final event in the series.

3.11 If the student or applicant is not satisfied with the decision at the conclusion of ACM's Formal stage or if the recommendations made at this stage are not implemented, they may appeal in the first instance to ACM's awarding body for their programme, which will follow its own process, as noted in 2.8 below.

3.12 For information on the complaints policy of their relevant awarding body, students should refer to:

- a) Degree students: Student Complaints and Grievance Procedures, Middlesex

University Regulations:

[Middlesex University Regulations: Complaints procedure](#)

b) Diploma Students: University of the Arts London's Student Complaints Procedures:
[University of the Arts, London: Student Complaints Procedures](#)

c) Diploma Students, where a grievance relates to funding: East Surrey College
Complaints Procedure:
[East Surrey College Complaints Procedure](#)

3.13 For applicants, decisions made by the awarding institution will be final, in line with their regulations.

3.14 **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator** - When ACM's internal procedures and those of the relevant awarding body have been concluded, students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Following this, if you are dissatisfied with the final decision on your case you may be able to apply to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\) for Higher Education](#).

3.15 For relatively minor queries or complaints, students and applicants are encouraged to raise them in the first instance an appropriate member of ACM staff may be able to resolve the issue without needing to make use of these Student Complaints and Grievances Policy, and corresponding Procedure.

Group Complaints

3.16 ACM recognises that students may wish to lodge complaints collectively. In such instances students are asked to nominate one spokesperson with whom ACM staff will liaise to address the complaint. This spokesperson should endeavour to gather the views of all of the students who wish to lodge the complaint.

Possible Outcomes from an Upheld Complaint

3.17 Where a complaint is upheld, ACM may instigate in any one or a combination of the following resolutions:

- A change in teaching content or teaching/support staff where applicable
- A partial or full refund of fees paid
- An opportunity for a student to repeat certain teaching without additional cost
- An altered date the student ceased study on a course.

4. Responsible Parties

4.1 The policy lead is responsible for the cyclical monitoring and review of the policy in liaison with ACM's Quality Team. The Student Complaints and Grievances Policy lead is:

- The Student Risk Committee

5. Reference Points

5.1 Internal Documents

- Academic Appeals
- Academic Integrity
- Admissions Policy
- Student Disciplinary
- Equality and Diversity

5.2 External Documents

- Middlesex University Regulations: Student complaints and grievance procedures
- University of the Arts, London: Student Complaint Procedures
- East Surrey College: Client Feedback Policy
- QAA Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints
- OIA Good Practice Framework

6. Date of Approval and Next Review

Version: 2

Approved by: Education Executive